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ABSTRACT

This document presents findings about the development and sustainability of academic nonprofit centers. It describes how such centers, which focus on the management and development of the nonprofit sector, work. The findings are based on a literature review, 16 personal interviews with current or former directors of nonprofit management or philanthropy focused academic centers, and program proposals and annual reports submitted by more than 20 academic nonprofit academic centers and programs funded in the past 10 years by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. Academic centers and academic departments often have similar missions, are staffed by faculty, and influence the culture of higher education, but centers tend to be more task-focused and interdisciplinary than academic departments. Centers tend to be boundary-spanning organizations that connect academic interests with external stakeholders. Centers develop in various ways, but external funders are often catalysts in center formation. The directors of academic nonprofit centers also tend to be boundary spanners, who are academic entrepreneurs with experience many traditional academics may lack. Institutional stability and academic credibility are two major challenge academic nonprofit centers face. To address these and other challenges, some recommendations are made for center directors for funding, involving faculty, building relationships, and networking. Some recommendations are also made for external funders. (Contains 12 references.) (SLD)

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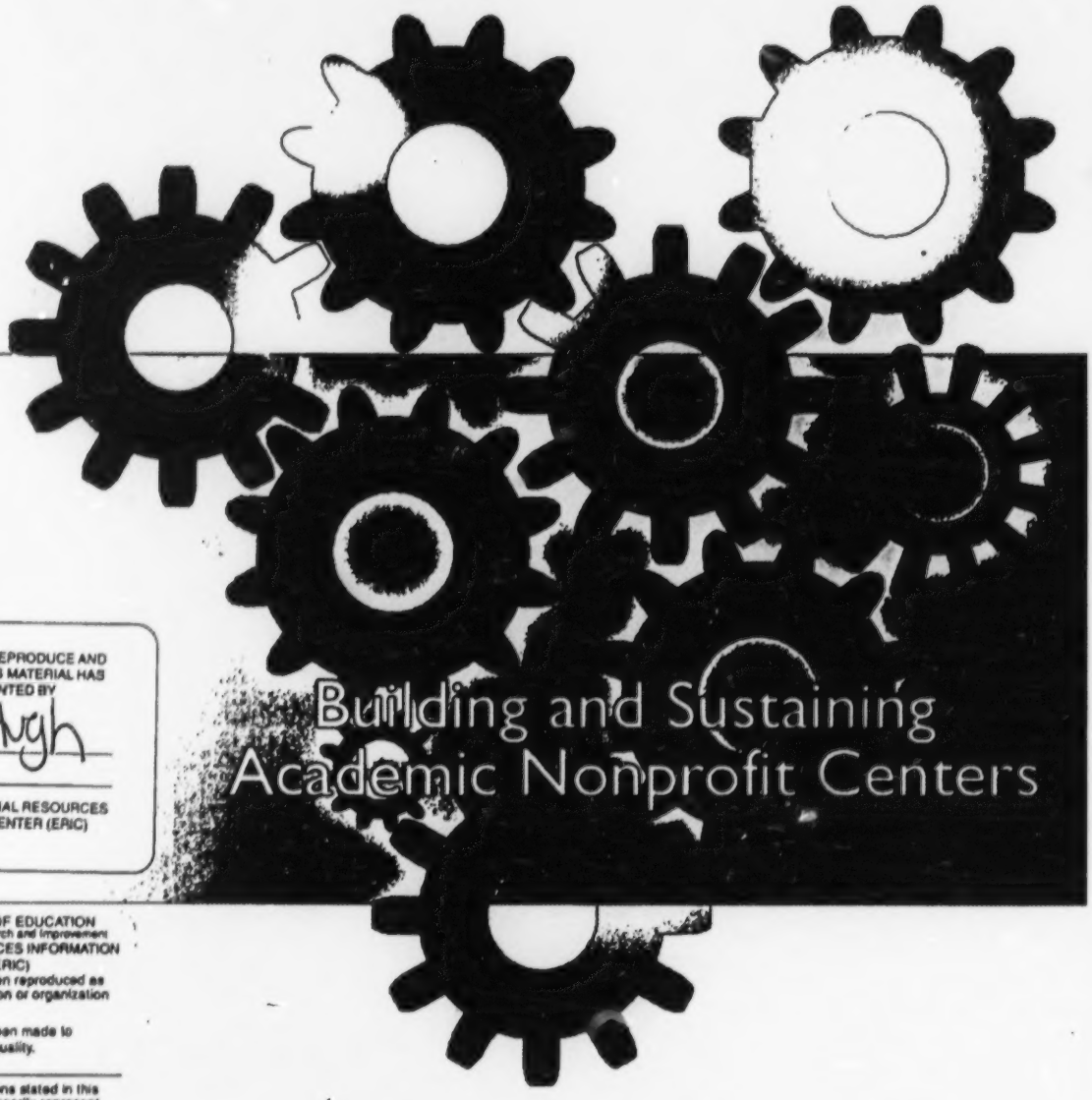

Building and Sustaining Academic Nonprofit Centers

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By R. Sam Larson and Sonia Barnes-Moorhead

with introductory letters by Robert F. Long and Michael O'Neill

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Introductory Letter

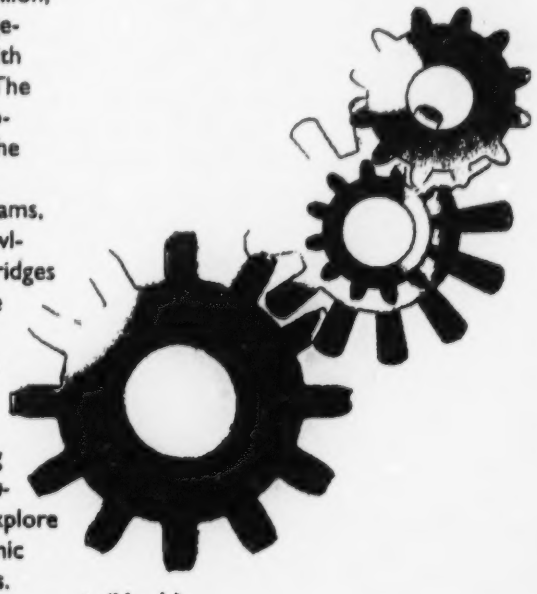
Robert F. Long
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

In the mid-1980s, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation began to invest in nonprofit management and philanthropic studies programs. After nearly fifty years of support for innovations in youth, family, and community development programs, the move to include strategic investments in the nonprofit sector and its philanthropic community was based on a rather simple logic—even the most innovative and successful programs are at risk of failure if the organizations within which they operate are weak and unsustainable.

The nonprofit organization context at that time also played an important role in the Foundation's decision. Nonprofit organizations were becoming an increasing source of support for and development of human services in the United States. These organizations had to respond to rapidly changing budgets and roles of the business and government sectors. As a result of the changes in the operating environment for nonprofit organizations, new management and leadership competencies were required of nonprofit leaders. They needed to have an increasing array of skills to enable people and organizations to improve the quality of life in their communities. Educational responses were needed to help prepare nonprofit leaders for these challenges. Today, while conditions continue to change and challenges multiply, a growing number and variety of educational programs and services now support the field.

Over 15 years ago the Kellogg Foundation made its first grants to support the development of a variety of nonprofit management education programs. The earliest of these investments included grants to new higher education responses at the University of San Francisco, Case Western Reserve University, and Indiana University. These programs continue to serve as models for other institutions developing educational responses to the needs of the nonprofit sector. Over the decade after those first investments, the nonprofit management and philanthropic studies movement grew at a rapid pace. The Foundation continued to invest in educational programs dedicated to increasing the capacity of community-based nonprofit organizations to foster creative responses to critical needs. During these years, over $15 million in grant funds was dedicated to improving the responsiveness of and access to nonprofit management and philanthropic studies programs.

Beginning in January 1997, the Foundation invested an additional $12.5 million, over four years, in an initiative to further strengthen the nonprofit management and philanthropic studies movement. The initiative was designed with input from two years of field research commissioned by the Foundation. The research revealed that a bridge needed to be built between academic programs and practitioners working in the field. The research also revealed the importance of better-trained leaders and the need for racial and cultural diversity. Nineteen projects, engaged in a wide range of educational programs, were supported through the Building Bridges Between Practice and Knowledge in Nonprofit Management Education Initiative (BBI). This Building Bridges Initiative was launched with the hope that, individually and collectively, the projects would have a positive impact on the nonprofit management and philanthropic studies movement and the field in general. Results from the initiative report and evaluation indicate that the goal was indeed met.



In 2000, to supplement the work being undertaken in the BBI, the Kellogg Foundation commissioned the study, *Building Philanthropy and Nonprofit Academic Centers: A View from Ten Builders*. The purpose of that study was to explore the development of early educational programs and the roles that academic innovators played in the development and sustainability of these programs. The summary of successful strategies those early innovators employed can, we

hope, inform the work of the BBI as well as current and future leaders in the field.

The Kellogg Foundation's involvement in the nonprofit management and philanthropic studies movement has followed a natural and inductive process, learning from early investments, becoming more strategic and targeted, and engaging in more active leadership efforts.

This publication is intended to provide insight into some of the key elements that are important in the success of educational programs in the nonprofit management and philanthropic studies movement. It is based on years of Kellogg Foundation investment, augmented by its commissioned research in the field, and supported by the voices of key leaders of this educational movement.

Robert F. Long
Vice President for Programs
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Introductory Letter

Michael O'Neill
University of San Francisco

During the last half century, and especially since the mid-1960s, America's nonprofit sector experienced phenomenal growth. One result was the new academic field of nonprofit management and philanthropic studies. In 1980 there were no master's degrees with nonprofit concentrations. By the end of the century there were 100, as well as many individual courses, certificates, and undergraduate majors. Annual research production grew from a handful to hundreds of articles and books on nonprofit themes. And now thousands attend conferences and read professional journals devoted to nonprofit research and practice.

Key to this development was an expanding network of academic centers. Some focused on research, others concentrated on teaching, many did both. Within their universities and communities, the centers raised the visibility of nonprofit studies and provided a base for program development, scientific inquiry, service to local nonprofits, and fundraising. The centers also communicated and cooperated with each other, especially through the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council, which now includes some 40 affiliates.

Through their education and training programs, research and publications, consulting and community service, the centers have had a powerful impact on the U.S. nonprofit sector. This is perhaps most evident in the thousands of students and graduates who "voted with their feet" for the nonprofit programs and returned to their organizations with new knowledge, skills, and self-confidence.

Nonprofit centers are ultimately the gift of a burgeoning nonprofit sector. Universities have made major resource commitments to the centers, especially through the work of dedicated faculty, administrators, and staff. Individual and institutional funders have played a critically important role. It is especially fitting that the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, one of the leading funders of the nonprofit academic centers, is the sponsor of this publication, which will be highly useful to both experienced and new nonprofit center leaders.

Michael O'Neill
Professor of Nonprofit Management
College of Professional Studies
University of San Francisco

HOW CENTERS WORK:
Building and Sustaining Academic Nonprofit Centers

Introduction

Accompanying the growth and development of nonprofit management as a recognized profession has been the parallel establishment and demand for academic programs that serve the nonprofit sector. In the United States, programs focused on nonprofit studies can be found in academic departments and schools of public administration, social work, and business. However, much of the research on nonprofit management, philanthropy more generally, and many of the graduate programs focused primarily on nonprofit management, are associated with academic centers or institutes.

The field of nonprofit studies has grown from the work of a set of academic centers and the faculty, administrators and staff who developed these centers. The builders of these centers provided the intellectual capital, practical knowledge, organizational skills, and, as we have learned, networks of relationships that have enabled other like minded persons to bring this topic of study to their own campuses.

In this document, we share findings about the development and sustainability of academic nonprofit centers. We describe how these centers work – how they were created, who leads them, how they are lead, and how they gain academic credibility and institutional stability. We hope that this publication provides you with information to help you build, expand, and support nonprofit academic centers and the field of nonprofit studies.

Methods

The statements and findings in this document are based on literature about academic centers in higher education institutions, 16 personal interviews with current or former directors of nonprofit management or philanthropy-focused academic centers, and program proposals and annual reports submitted by more than 20 nonprofit academic centers and programs funded in the past 10 years by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The categories we use to discuss how centers work are grounded in the personal interviews and annual reports, and complemented by the literature. When we speak about academic centers in general, we use the term *centers*. When speaking about nonprofit management or philanthropy-focused academic centers, we use the term *nonprofit center*. Margin quotes are from personal interviews with nonprofit center directors.

"I think that the centers have been the engines, have been the leaders. The reason that we have about 100 programs with a focus on nonprofit management is because of the initial centers that started the work."

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Academic Centers and Academic Departments: Similarities and Differences

"Centers need to be in the university, but not of the university. They need to talk academic language for sustainability while challenging academic assumptions."

- **Academic centers and academic departments often have similar missions, are staffed by faculty, and influence the culture of higher education.**
- **Centers tend to be more task-focused and interdisciplinary than academic departments.**
- **Centers tend to be boundary-spanning organizations that connect academic interests with external stakeholders.**
- **Centers are flexible organizations that can change staffing and programs in response to societal demands for new knowledge.**

Academic centers are similar to academic departments in several ways. They often have similar missions centered on research, teaching, and outreach. Centers and departments are both primarily staffed by faculty members or personnel with advanced degrees. Both also often rely on a mix of internal and external funding (Sharp-Pucci et al., 1994). As members of the broader academic community, both departments and centers are influenced by the culture of higher education.

In other ways, however, academic departments and academic centers are quite dissimilar. Center activities tend to be more precisely defined and task-oriented than departments. Centers tend to be interdisciplinary–drawing on faculty and literature from more than one university department or discipline. Departments, in contrast, are typically organized around a single discipline. Centers also typically rely less on institutional funding than do academic departments.

Centers have become a mechanism through which higher education institutions can become more responsive to the communities they serve and move beyond the boundaries and traditions that often constrain departments. Centers tend to be boundary-spanning organizations–facilitating the flow of information between the university and its environment.

Centers are more flexible organizational structures than are academic departments. While departments are bound by policies, practices, and traditions, centers are expected to respond more quickly to the needs and requirements of research patrons and sponsors (Stahler and Tash, 1994). Thus, centers may change their staffing, their programs, perhaps even their mission, in response to societal demands for new knowledge (Geiger, 1990). Related to this point, Sharp-Pucci et al. (1994) describe an "atmosphere of impermanence" about centers because staff, programs, funding support, and other resources are likely to be in flux.

Creating Nonprofit Centers

What gives rise to the creation of a nonprofit center? We found that nonprofit centers develop from the interests of individual faculty members and university administrators, and through the influence of external funders–primarily family, private, and community foundations.

The push for forming academic nonprofit centers typically comes from within the university and consists of faculty interests coalescing with support from key administrative leaders. One nonprofit center director told us, "I got this idea to start a center on nonprofit studies, and went to two deans who knew me and had confidence in my ability to bring off the program." Faculty interest and administrative support came together at another nonprofit center where the director said that a couple of faculty got "excited about the idea of starting a center" and the provost at the time "loved the vision, loved everything, would come to every meeting" and supported the idea. At another nonprofit center, the internal push "actually came from the administration; the president and provost at the time decided this was an important idea." The administrators then brought the director into the center.

"Two private foundations have helped us and we have had some very good support from a department chair. But centers also need a president or a provost or a dean who understands what is going on and the value of this field."

External funders–particularly family, private, and community foundations–can be catalysts in the development of a nonprofit academic center. One nonprofit center director said the idea for his center, and the impetus for its development, "originally came from a local family foundation that got other funders involved in the notion." These external funders provided the capital and the university supplied the space and human resources to start the center. A similar story is told by another director who said that the original idea or push for the center came from a foundation program officer. This same foundation later became the major funder for that center.

- **Nonprofit centers usually emerge from the efforts of faculty, administrators, and/or external funders who recognize a societal need for research and education focused on nonprofit management and philanthropy**

In some cases, though not typically, demands by students and practitioners for more training and information may jump-start the creation of an academic nonprofit center. One nonprofit center director said that the push for his center came, more or less, from "a group of professionals whose special education needs were not being provided by any other graduate educational programs." The educational interests and needs of students and practitioners are often used by nonprofit center directors as one way to validate the need for the center and sometimes as a way to show how the program can connect the university with the community. However, student and practitioner demand alone does not give rise to the creation of nonprofit centers. The bigger push for nonprofit center development comes from faculty and administrators, and from external funders.

Disciplinary Affiliation of Nonprofit Centers

"This center evolved. I started by developing a concentration and offering courses in nonprofits, and now we're a center."

- **The colleges or departments most frequently associated with nonprofit centers are public administration, public policy or government.**
- **Nonprofit center directors might report to a dean or directly to a provost or vice president.**
- **At this time, there is no one "right" place for nonprofit centers within the university structure.**

The study of nonprofit management is closely linked to the study of public administration (Mirabella and Wish, 2001). This finding is consistent with the location of many nonprofit centers. Of the 34 universities associated with the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council (NACC)[1], 15 are in or affiliated with colleges or departments in public administration, public policy, or government. For example, the Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership at Grand Valley State University is in the School of Public and Nonprofit Administration; the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations at Harvard University is located within the School of Government; and the Institute for Nonprofit Management at Portland State University is in the School of Public Administration. The second most common disciplinary affiliation among the NACC members is schools of business or management. For example, the Center for Nonprofit Management at Northwestern University is in the School of Management, and the Center for Nonprofit Management at St. Thomas University is in the Graduate School of Business. Several NACC centers affiliate with more than one college or department. For example, the director of the Mandel Center at Case Western Reserve University reports to the deans of the Colleges of Applied Social Science, Management, and Law; and the Program on Nonprofit and Public Management at the University of Michigan is a collaboration among the Colleges of Business, Public Policy, and Social Work.

Several of the NACC members are free-standing units where the director does not report to a dean, but to a provost or vice president of the university. For example, the nonprofit program at Tufts University is now the University College of Citizenship and Public Service. At The Union Institute, the director of the Center on Public Policy reports to the Office for Social Responsibility. The director of the Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania reports to the Office of the Vice President for Government, Community and Public Affairs and to the provost. A couple of NACC members are affiliated with schools of social work, schools of professional studies, law programs, or continuing education offices.

Young (1998) points out that nonprofit centers within a single school have the difficult task of convincing their colleagues in a relatively homogeneous disciplinary area of the importance of the field of nonprofit studies, though it may be an easier case to make in an area like public administration. A center within a single school may, however, have a better chance of getting its priorities taken seriously because it competes within a relatively smaller unit and relates more directly to the interests of that unit. Young also points out the advantages and challenges of freestanding, interdisciplinary centers. These centers can define programs on their own terms without having to conform to the interests of a

[1] The Nonprofit Academic Centers Council (NACC) was formed to foster discussion and collaboration among academic centers devoted to the study of the private, nonprofit sector and philanthropy in order to advance education, research, and practice in this field. Membership in NACC is limited to those academic centers at accredited colleges or universities that have a substantial focus on the private, nonprofit sector or philanthropy and have a significant research component on these topics. NACC, formed in 1993, is currently housed at Independent Sector in Washington, D.C.

particular school or discipline. They may also be able to more easily draw together faculty with interests in nonprofit studies. However, they cannot "command the priorities of the schools on which they draw, and they must operate purely on a quid pro quo basis in order to secure faculty participation and other needed resources" (Young, 1998, p. 130).

The variety of disciplinary arrangements and reporting lines suggest that there is no one disciplinary affiliation or organizational model that is "right" for a nonprofit center. Public administration, public policy, and government affairs may be the most common disciplinary affiliation, but it would not be unusual to see nonprofit centers affiliate with other social science or health and human oriented disciplines. Each organizational model (e.g., a unit within a department or college, a freestanding unit) has advantages and disadvantages. Young (1998) suggests that to overcome organizational or structural difficulties, nonprofit centers may need to transform into more traditional academic units such as schools or colleges, but he also says that such a transformation may be a long time coming.

The Missions of Nonprofit Centers

Although nonprofit centers share a common mission–to understand and improve the third sector–they each focus on varying aspects of this mission. Under the umbrella of the third sector, some academic nonprofit centers focus on philanthropy and civic engagement while others focus on management and policy issues. Taken as a whole, these centers often complement rather than compete with each other. One nonprofit center director said he saw no reason to offer a nonprofit management program because another school "right down the street" was doing so and "there is no reason to duplicate that." The distinctions and complementary missions among nonprofit centers are not accidental. It seems that in this new area of study, key players–such as the center directors of the initial academic nonprofit centers–looked for unique niches within the field so that their contributions were not redundant and helped to expand the knowledge base of the field.

Academic nonprofit centers typically begin with narrow missions, perhaps focused on a single activity such as teaching or a single topic such as fundraising. However, their missions often expand over time as directors and staff broaden the scope of *activities* a center undertakes. One nonprofit center director said, "Initially, the center was focused on instructional outreach. But you can't really have a great center without a good research program and a great community service. So we broadened the mission of the center." Missions also change over time by nonprofit centers expanding the range of *topics* they address. One center director said that with his appointment to the position, his nonprofit center "moved away from the focus of citizen participation and towards an emphasis on nonprofit leadership and management."

- **Nonprofit centers share a common core mission–to understand and improve the mechanisms of the nonprofit or "third sector." However, centers focus on different aspects of this common mission. Taken together, these nonprofit centers complement rather than compete with each other.**

- **The missions of nonprofit centers expand over time by broadening the scope of activities and range of topics they address. Thus, the missions of nonprofit centers often become more comprehensive over time.**

- **A "uniqueness" of nonprofit centers is that they expand their missions to meet societal demands and environmental opportunities, while keeping their core missions of focusing on the third sector.**

- **Academic nonprofit center directors typically have doctorates. Their advanced degrees cover a range of disciplines including engineering, urban studies and planning, public administration, education, and business administration.**

- **Nonprofit center directors often have experience working in the nonprofit, governmental, or commercial sectors prior to their roles in academe. Thus, many center directors have experience that traditional academics may lack.**

- **Nonprofit center directors' educational and professional on-the-job experiences help them to empathize with practitioners and develop programs that are responsive to community concerns.**

- **Nonprofit center directors are boundary spanners and must network and build relationships with key constituents–within and external to the university. These relationships contribute to both institutional and financial support.**

- **Center directors are academic entrepreneurs–they are innovators, risk takers, and highly committed to the field.**

Nonprofit centers appear to become more inclusive of activities and topics, overtime. This is a "uniqueness" of academic centers–the ability to make changes to meet societal demands and environmental opportunities. Yet there is a consistency of mission across the nonprofit centers and that is their focus on the third sector.

Nonprofit Center Directors

Academic-Practitioners

Most nonprofit center directors have doctoral degrees. Their degrees are from disciplines such as engineering, urban studies and planning, public administration, education, and business administration. For some nonprofit center directors, their involvement in nonprofit studies began early in their careers. One director told us that since graduate school she had been "facilitating a lot of consulting with nonprofit boards, sitting on nonprofit boards, my research was on nonprofit boards, and I was just simply interested in nonprofits." For other center directors, their involvement in nonprofit studies and philanthropy was happenstance. One nonprofit center director said:

> After I got my Ph.D., I went to a research institute. Most of the projects developed there were about privatization and new ways to provide public services and different institutional arrangements. That got me interested in the economics of public service. In the context of those projects, nonprofits sort of popped up–so that was kind of the genesis of it. I then had in the back of my mind that at some point I might want to try academia and was recruited to a university.

Many nonprofit center directors have had careers outside of academe. To varying extents, many were working in the nonprofit, governmental, or commercial sectors. Center directors we talked with had held positions in public and private K-12 education, nonprofit organizations such as the Peace Corps and youth camps, and one had been the president of an international corporate foundation. The diversity in the education and work experiences of directors may contribute to the building and expansion of centers as they draw on management and personnel skills developed in non-academic arenas. It is also possible that the prior nonprofit work experiences help these directors to empathize with practitioners and develop responsive programming. The diverse backgrounds of many directors, oftentimes rooted in nonprofit practice, may provide the grounding for centers to be more responsive to community concerns than might be the case if the directors came from a more traditional academic career path.

Nonprofit center directors straddle many environments–networking and linking with people on- and off-campus to garner financial and human resources to meet the challenges of building centers. Center directors engage in what the literature refers to as boundary spanning.

Boundary spanners are concerned with representing or protecting the integrity of their business or academic center. They are always monitoring, scanning, and being a gatekeeper of their environment; and always building, linking, and coordinating different types of relationships (At-Twaijri and Montanari, 1987). The interdisciplinary nature of academic nonprofit centers and their close connection with communities also often requires center directors to play a boundary-spanning role. In addition, center directors must work with faculty members from different disciplines and bring them together to carry out the mission and objectives of the center–they are constantly maintaining and building good relationships with faculty members, and fulfilling their needs, while keeping the integrity of the program intact.

One nonprofit center director describes his role as "an interesting inside-outside role where I am dealing with diverse constituents in many institutions and bridging with significant local and national external constituents ... so what you learn in the process of that is helpful with other challenges." When asked how the challenge of building an academic nonprofit center was met, one center director said, "I boundary span within the institution–with the president's office, with the development office, and with some other divisions of the college. But," he added, "my focus is also external." A third center director says of her role:

> There's a lot of relationship building that has to be done. You have to find and cultivate potential allies when you start building these centers and programs. ... It could be a university administrator, it could be a faculty member, and it could be a friendly development officer with the university.

Consistent with networking and boundary spanning, building effective relationships requires the center directors to believe in their "cause." One director talks about the importance of relationships in the development and subsequent sustainability of nonprofit academic centers:

> It starts with the notion that there's something of value here to be achieved and a pretty strong commitment to that notion. Then there's this ability to enthuse other people of the same thing. That's really the basis for the relationship building.

"If you've got an idea that you think is a good one, and you got some energy behind it yourself, and you have the ability to convert, persuade, sell other people on that idea, then you got the basis for building this relationship."

In many instances, center directors are similar to corporate or social entrepreneurs. Nonprofit center directors are highly committed to an idea or cause, are innovative, draw from a set of varied work and professional experiences, and take risks. Perhaps these directors can be best described as "academic entrepreneurs."

Nonprofit center directors are not always the ones to conceive of the need for an academic center. Sometimes it is a university administrator or external funding agent who gives rise to the creation of the nonprofit center, but it is center directors who expand the missions of centers, develop partnerships with communities, and link the centers with the larger network of nonprofit researchers and academicians. Center directors are entrepreneurial–finding ways to address and overcome funding problems, while encouraging faculty involvement, support of university leadership, and the visibility of the field. Sometimes they use managerial strategies, such as negotiating tuition returns with university administrators or using money to recruit faculty. But oftentimes they champion these challenges by relying on their interpersonal relationships both within and outside of the university.

"For centers, which fall outside of traditional lines, it is critical for them to have sufficient resources, leadership, and legitimacy."

The Challenge of Institutional Stability

If academic nonprofit centers are to be sustained, they need to address issues of institutional stability and academic credibility. Institutional stability refers to a center's ability to sustain itself as an organization within the university. Academic credibility relates to the center's ability to meet faculty and disciplinary expectations. These two attributes parallel the core administrative and academic functions and traditions associated with higher education institutions.

- **Academic centers are organizations within larger institutions and they must ensure that their place in the institution is stable. Stable funding, key leadership support, organizational fit, and community connections are requisite conditions for institutional stability.**

- **Stable funding is often the biggest obstacle for nonprofit center directors to overcome.**

For nonprofit centers, stable funding, leadership support, organizational fit, and community connections appear to be requisite conditions for institutional stability.

Funding

A critical component of institutional stability is financial stability. One nonprofit center director told us that "a major challenge for each director is how to keep the place afloat financially." This sentiment is shared by another director who said that his nonprofit center has always been "a soft money program and I've always had to generate 50 percent of my salary, and the salaries of all my staff. Even though we generate considerable money from the program I'm not going to get institutional support. I have to be self-supporting."

Many nonprofit centers and departments are funded through a mix of internal and external funds. A stable internal line of funding from the university to the center provides security in terms of maintaining an ongoing program. Internal funds may come from the university's general operat-

ing budget or from student tuition and fees. Another type of internal financial support is waiver of overhead-head costs or in-kind contributions such as faculty and secretarial time. Internal funds may also be necessary for a center to generate financial support from federal and state agencies and foundations as many external funds are predicated on some level of internal funds. Yet, even when a center receives external funds it is unlikely that most centers will ever be completely self-sufficient and operate without internal funds (Wodarski, 1995). Simply put, some ongoing commitment of internal funding appears to be necessary if a center is to be institutionally stable.

External funding for nonprofit centers may come from foundations, private donations from individuals or organizations, state or federal agencies, or through the sale of products or services to external constituencies. Many of the nonprofit center directors we talked with had received foundation funds but few mentioned seeking funds from federal agencies or private corporations. One of the critical challenges regarding the acceptance of external funds is the interest of the funding source. External funding should support the mission or vision of a program rather than direct it. This requires developing relationships with funding agencies to encourage them to support the mission or vision of the center (Wodarski, 1995) or limiting grant proposals to those that fall within the mission or vision of the center. Wodarski as well as Stahler and Tash (1994) caution centers against "chasing dollars." In such a game, a center may respond to a funding source where the funders' expectations are a poor fit with the center's mission (Young, 1998). Thus, the center's mission is eroded and internal support may be weakened.

The funding of nonprofit centers may have a symbolic component to it. Staff at nonprofit centers comment that internal funding encourages others in the university to have expectations of the center and that external funding is a form of external validation and a way to improve the center's prestige.

Leadership Support

The higher the reporting authority of an academic center, the more the center may be considered a university priority by central administrators (Stahler and Tash, 1994). Thus, a center that reports to a dean, provost, or president may be more of a central priority to the institution than a center that reports to a department chair. We found that administrative support was often associated with the initiation of nonprofit academic centers and that lack of support by a key administrator could stifle the development of the nonprofit center. One nonprofit center director said that commitment from someone "high up" will lead to less resistance to center actions and goals:

> You need a president or a provost or a dean that really understands what is going on and what the value of this is and why you want to do it, because then there is going to be less resistance.

- **An ongoing commitment of internal financial support may be necessary to develop a center's capacity to attract external funds or for matching external funds.**
- **External funding should match the mission of the center. A poor match of center mission and funder expectations could erode a center's mission.**
- **Centers need an administrator to champion their mission within the university. Lack of support from at least one key administrator may stifle the development of a center.**
- **Centers need to be linked with other academic units and professionals on campus. These connections may assist centers in garnering more internal dollars as well as creating a closer alignment with the mission of the university.**
- **Nonprofit centers may link the university with the community and, thereby, help the university fulfill part of its mission. Community connections may, then, stabilize a nonprofit center's position within a university.**

Another center director told us:

> Even though the funding doesn't come from the university by and large, your future in a center that has a mission outside of the university depends very much on the main university administration, even though the funding doesn't.

Nearly all nonprofit center directors report that the president of the university supports their work and such evidence can be found in speeches where the president specifically mentions the center, direct contact with the president, and assurances by the president for continued financial support. Presidents, and other top administrative leaders, often support these centers because they view them as an important link with the community and as performing an important service function.

Support by university leadership means more than financial support. When presidents, provosts, and deans uphold the need for and existence of nonprofit centers they legitimize the field and symbolically elevate the standing of the center within the university.

Organizational Fit

The institutional stability of a center may also be a function of how and to whom centers are interconnected–that is, how they network or link with other units on campus. Centers that are centrally located within the formal organizational structure are more likely to receive higher levels of external and internal financial support (Stahler and Tash, 1994), and to be perceived as having an administrative and programmatic commitment by higher administration (Friedman and Friedman, 1984) than centers located on the periphery of the organization.

Ebata (1996) states that collaboratives, such as centers, can be connected through "lines and boxes" on an organizational chart, but the success of a center may depend on the links among people and the kinds of relationships that they establish. These linkages enable the center to draw on the expertise of other departments for collaboration on grant development and proposal preparation. Informal linkages with university administration, such as involvement in governance and university committees, are also important to maintain (Stahler and Tash, 1994).

"How the community perceives the center is important to the image of the university."

Community Connections

Nonprofit center staffs frequently interact and work with external constituents or community groups. These connections with external audiences can help garner support from university administrators. A nonprofit center may be one of the few ways that a university reaches out to the public and is, therefore, important to the image of the university held by the community. One center director noted that "the center's linkages with the community provide the university with community connections it would not otherwise have."

Community connections can also lead to internal and external funding of the program. Internally, these connections may result in more student tuition and fees as community groups encourage employee involvement in educational programs provided by nonprofit centers. In addition, ties with community organizations may result in external funds to support research and outreach activities.

In addition, most nonprofit center directors personally enjoy the interactions with the community and are committed on a professional and personal level to maintaining and expanding community-center linkages.

"Finance is not the significant barrier to sustainability. Infiltrating degree structures, faculty structures, permeating the culture – these are the significant barriers."

The Challenge of Academic Credibility

Center sustainability requires more than institutional stability, it requires recognition by and association with the academic core of the institution. The need for nonprofit centers to be academically credible should not be surprising given that they are located on university campuses and directed by academicians. As stated earlier, academic credibility concerns the center's ability to meet faculty disciplinary and institutional expectations. We link a nonprofit management center's academic credibility to the centrality of the center's mission to the university's mission, to faculty involvement in the center, and the visibility of the field.

Mission

Most universities define their mission in terms of research, teaching, and service. Some universities, however, may stress one function over another. A university may focus its attention more on research activities than on service activities. In practice, one function may be more highly valued by faculty in the tenure and promotion process, as often is the case with research. For university administrators and faculty to view a center as academically credible, its mission must be consistent with the university's mission and goals and it must represent a logical initiative within the university's over-all research program (Friedman and Friedman, 1984; Stahler and Tash, 1994). In addition, the mission of the center needs to be conceptually stable–that is, while programs may change to reflect opportunities or needs external to the center, the mission or central purpose of the center must not change if the center is to be viewed as academically credible (Wodarski, 1995).

Faculty Involvement

If nonprofit centers want to be part of the academic core they must involve faculty in fulfilling the mission of the center. Faculty members are needed to develop and teach courses, to conduct research, and to provide technical assistance and outreach. How faculty are employed varies among nonprofit centers. Some faculty are adjuncts, paid for teaching a single course. Other faculty are university faculty who have a portion of their time supported by a center while their academic department continues to be their organizational home. Some nonprofit center directors support the creation of faculty lines in the centers, indicating that this helps to

- **Center sustainability requires more than institutional stability-it requires academic credibility. To be academically credible, a center's mission must be central to the university's mission, faculty must be involved, and the field must be visible or known to faculty and administrators.**
- **The mission of a nonprofit center must align with the mission of the university and it must be conceptually stable.**
- **Faculty involvement is key to a center becoming and maintaining academic credibility. Faculty involvement may vary from teaching an occasional course to faculty having tenure lines in or affiliated with the center.**

"To institutionalize centers, we need core faculty."

stabilize the funding base and elevates the credibility of the program. Other directors told us that centers are better served when faculty have tenure appointments in other departments because this adds to the prestige of the field of nonprofit studies, adds to the interdisciplinarity of the field, and helps centers become more institutionally stable by linking them with other parts of the university.

Faculty members associated with nonprofit centers are often attracted to the problem focus and interdisciplinary nature of these centers. These faculty members may see their involvement in center activities as part of their research, teaching, or service responsibilities. Faculty may also find affiliation with a center to have certain advantages not necessarily found in departments. For example, through involvement with a center, faculty may gain access to community groups, to collaborative projects, to external funding opportunities, and to applied research projects involving community groups. In addition, affiliation with a center may also provide faculty with valuable experience in working with more seasoned researchers and access to better research support (Stahler and Tash, 1994).

- **Traditional promotion and tenure guidelines may discourage faculty involvement in nonprofit centers because their efforts may not lead to peer-reviewed published research articles. In addition, involvement in the center may alienate faculty from their disciplinary coleagues.**

- **Faculty interests need to be balanced with community interests.**

- **A center usually succeeds or fails as a result of the director's leadership.**

- **Because the field of nonprofit and philanthropic studies is new, nonprofit center directors have to make it visible to faculty, students and administrators. Making it visible requires showing parties that it is a legitimate area of study.**

Perhaps the most pervasive barrier to faculty involvement in centers is the academic reward system. Involvement in interdisciplinary center research by faculty may limit or at least challenge their ability to receive tenure or promotion (Sharp-Pucci et al., 1995; Stahler and Tash, 1994; Wodarski, 1995; Dooris and Fairweather, 1992). Faculty within departments, acting as a group, typically control tenure and promotion, and their decisions are often made on the basis of single-author, peer-reviewed publications. However, the product line of a center is more complex, consisting of peer-reviewed publications, technology transfer, multicenter collaboration, governmental reports, review panels, and industry consulting. According to Sharp-Pucci et al., evaluation of a center's members solely on the basis of single-author, peer-reviewed publications is neither valid nor accurate. One nonprofit center director said:

> I think the major challenge is to how you build a center at a university where faculty have to teach and do research and service is shunned...How do you build up and do research and technical assistance and get faculty to do that when the reward system is not there to support it?

An additional concern that faculty may have is that center affiliation may alienate faculty from their disciplinary colleagues (Dooris and Fairweather, 1992), or at least limit the time available to build relationships with departmental or disciplinary collaborators.

In turn, nonprofit center directors expressed concerns or reservations about faculty involvement in centers. Directors mention that faculty can exploit the relationships nonprofit centers have with the nonprofit community. They are concerned that faculty research may represent only the interests of the faculty member and not consider the needs of the practitioner. As one director said of faculty and the community, "It's not just what faculty need, but what they can also offer–it's a concomitant relationship."

Faculty members are not the only staff that can add academic credibility to the center. Friedman and Friedman (1984) state that the leader or director should possess valid scholarly credentials and have a reputation commensurate with that of the ranking senior members of the departments from which the center hopes to draw faculty members. A center, because of the hierarchical nature of the unit, usually succeeds or fails as a result of the director's leadership, and changes in the leadership of a center may change the character of a center more markedly than would be true for any comparable change in a department (Stahler and Tash, 1994).

Visibility of the Field

Many nonprofit center directors talked about the challenges of convincing people, particularly faculty and university administrators, that nonprofit and philanthropy is a legitimate area of study. One director said he struggled with articulating the "idea" of philanthropy and nonprofit studies to university administrators. He said their response was "What is this thing?" and that he had to "make it a subject." Another builder said he had to make the program and the field "visible" to the senior university officials – "they didn't understand it and, therefore, it wasn't considered a flagship program or a significant kind of new venture."

The field also needs to be visible to students. One nonprofit director said:

> Visibility was a very big issue and challenge, especially with regard to tracking and recruiting people for our own master's program. Prospective students would raise a very legitimate question: 'What if I spend all of this time and get this degree and then I go and try and get a job with it and people say, I've never heard of this degree – good-bye?'

Recommendations for Sustaining Nonprofit Academic Centers

Looking ahead, we see application of these findings for current and future center directors or leaders and for external funders.

For Center Directors and Leaders:

Funding

Directors of nonprofit centers offer several strategies for addressing funding issues. For one, create a more stable funding base by diversifying the center's resource base. Several centers have negotiated for a return of tuition dollars to the center. Others charge fees for technical assistance programs. Most nonprofit academic centers also raise external funds from foundations and, to lesser degrees, from nonprofit partners, corporations, and government agencies. One center director said much of his job was "constantly shaking hands, going out, fundraising, and everything."

- **Nonprofit centers need to diversify their internal and external resource base.**
- **Secure internal streams of funding through deans, provosts, and presidents by showing how the center helps the university fulfill its mission.**
- **Don't let the search for external funds shift the mission of the center. Incongruous funds could result in a short-term gain but a long-term loss of focus.**

- **Recruit faculty by appealing to their research interests and the excitement of the field.**
- **Recruit faculty by offering faculty research and/or teaching funds.**
- **Use external funds to leverage faculty positions.**
- **Be mindful of the promotion and tenure process and try to influence it when possible.**

Educating key administrators about the importance of the work of the center and how the center helps the university to fulfill its mission can help secure a more stable line of internal funding. One nonprofit center director said she educates foundations' staff "about the importance of building the educational knowledge infrastructures of the field."

Another point raised by nonprofit center directors and the literature is not to let the mission of the center drift to follow a funding source. Eroding the mission of the center can lead to weakened internal support and a loss of organizational identity.

Involving Faculty

Nonprofit center directors often seek out faculty on their campuses that have an interest in nonprofits and/or philanthropy. Sometimes the directors convene monthly brown-bag lunches where faculty can present their work and ideas to others. This is an important avenue for involving faculty and graduate students with little, if any, cost to the center. This is also one of many ways that nonprofit centers can inform the larger university community about the mission, goals, and focus of the center. After all, faculty can't become involved with a center if they don't know about it.

Centers can recruit faculty by offering research funds that can be used to collect data, buy-out a course, or support summer salaries, among other options. Teaching funds can also encourage faculty involvement in a center. These funds can support overload instruction pay, be used to upgrade courses, or to enhance the faculty's own understanding of pedagogy. The grants do not have to be large and can be publicized on campus through a variety of venues.

One nonprofit center director said he used the excitement of the field to attract faculty. He went to untenured or junior faculty and said, "You can get ahead in your own discipline by working here because there are all kinds of interesting things going on here. There are frontiers here."

It is also possible that faculty involvement in a center can be secured by having a faculty tenure line in the center or having a tenure line in a department with the funding for that line originating in the center. Though neither are common practices, nonprofit center directors indicate that both are happening more now than in the recent past. At one center, the director used external funding to leverage within the university for tenure-stream faculty lines focused on nonprofit studies.

Finally, center directors need to be mindful of the faculty reward system. Center directors can try to influence tenure and promotion criteria to be more in line with the work of a center. Faculty can also encourage committees to include practitioners who can "peer" review for promotion and tenure the outreach, technical assistance, applied research, and service often associated with centers.

- **Connecting a center to work with other universities is one way to make nonprofit centers more visible.**
- **Nonprofit centers need to market themselves–they need to tell and show university administrators, faculty, and the community their accomplishments.**

Increasing the Visibility of the Field

Increasing the visibility of the field takes effort and time. One nonprofit center director talked with university leaders and said, "Look, this isn't crazy. Yale has been doing research for years on this. There is a growing center at Case Western, San Francisco and Duke." Being able to make a connection to other programs–externally validating the center–can be an important strategic move to increase a center or the field's visibility. External funding may also address issues of visibility. One director said:

> The vigorous participation by the Kellogg Foundation and a handful of other major foundations provides very useful funding. It is also a tap from a prestigious foundation stating that this is a topic of high priority concern and, in a very interesting way, addresses the academic legitimacy concern.

Centers also need to publicize and make visible their work–publications should be forwarded to administrators and departments, and media on campus should be used to disseminate center work (Wodarski, 1995). Centers need to market their achievements in procuring funds, scholarly publications, community programs, clinical outcomes, and even management style. Centers that have been successful have taken this proactive approach to visibility, attention, and accountability (Sharp-Pucci et al., 1994). Such efforts also serve to inform the local community of the center's activities and to promote future relationships with constituent groups.

"There were a half dozen of us sitting around a table saying we ought to have some sort of an association of centers and we started to meet. And the thing I want to emphasize was that there was this culture–it was like we were in this together."

Building Relationships and Networking

The successful initiation and sustainability of a center may be a function of how and to whom center directors are connected–that is, how they network or link with other units and people on- and off-campus. Ebata (1996) indicates that center directors need to play a boundary-spanning role. Friedman and Podolny (1992) refer to boundary-spanners as those who work with people outside their own groups and have influence between constituents and their opponents. According to one center director, developing and sustaining a center requires "slowly building support among those faculty at the university who can be influential and those administrators that can be influential. But buying in takes a long time."

- **Center directors build relationships within and external to the university.**
- **Nonprofit center directors connect with each other. One director offers this advice to new directors: "Connect regularly with other center directors. Learn from them and support them. Together, we can identify challenges where we will have more impact if we work in concert."**

Meeting the challenges of building and sustaining not only nonprofit academic centers, but also a field of study, is not something that the center directors do in isolation. In addition to building relationships within and external to the university, center directors are purposeful about constructing a network among fellow center directors.

An informal support system among nonprofit center directors emerged when the initial centers were developing. This network, now formalized as the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council (NACC), has been sustained and augmented out of the need for center directors to connect and interact with colleagues facing similar challenges and working on similar issues. NACC, as well as informal networks of personal relationships among the center directors, provides directors the opportunity to exchange ideas, to

come up with solutions to common challenges, and to know that they are not alone in meeting their mission. One nonprofit center director spoke about the "satisfaction of just knowing a lot of people to call on for advice. Gee, you know, being able to call up this one and that one and say, 'Hey, can you help us out here!'" Another center director said, "The directors work pretty well together as a group. We enjoy our informal personal working relationships and communications. And we also enjoy working together to make a difference in the field." One nonprofit center director nicely sums up the value of working together:

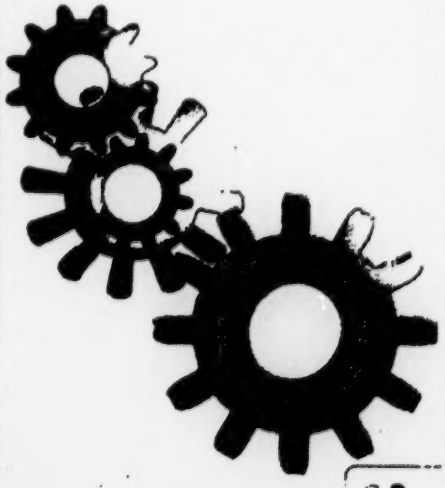
> I think the ability to find and work with other people doing similar things to what I was doing in this growing field of nonprofit sector studies was a very important contributor to what it is I do now. I was able to identify people in other universities who were also trying to start new programs and build institutions within their university settings. As we began to meet and communicate in formal and informal ways, a support group grew up among us. So we learned from each other by sharing experiences about what was happening in our own institution while learning what was happening in other institutions. That sort of external collection and sharing of information turned out to be a powerful tool that we all used to help us do what we were trying to do in our home institutions.

The network and relationships among nonprofit center directors supports more than the individuals and their centers–it also builds the field of study. Consider this comment from a center director:

> We felt really dedicated to building the field. That was what was special. It wasn't that we were just building some unit or part of some program in our own universities. We were building a brand new field. We all felt that we had common problems. We were all fighting for our place in the sun and in our own universities and there was a lot of similarity.

Formal organizations such as NACC, the Association for Research on Nonprofit and Voluntary Association (ARNOVA), Independent Sector, and the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR) play an important role in the growth and sustainability of nonprofit centers.[2] These professional organizations provide connections to research and venues for discussion. Says one nonprofit center director, "These organizations are not just about building the community, this is legitimization of the field, of a theoretical framework. These professional organizations have a tremendous impact."

On some level, there may be competition among and between the centers, perhaps over external funding opportunities or the hiring of faculty. But overall, nonprofit center directors work closely with each other—sharing



[2]For more information about these organizations, please see the appropriate website: NACC at http://www.independentsector.org/programs/leadership/nacc.html, ARNOVA at www.arnova.org, Independent Sector at www.independentsector.org and ISTR at http://www.jhu.edu/~istr/.

ideas and strategies for meeting organizational challenges based on their own experiences. They provide moral support to each other, helping to frame the issue at hand as not just the survival of any one center, but of the emergence of a field of study. It seems as if nonprofit management academic centers were built collectively and not individually.

For External Funders:

External funders can play, and indeed have played, an important role in the development, expansion, and on-going support of academic centers.

External funders can provide financial support for the on-going organizational development needs of centers as well as funding the development of new centers. External funders can also aid centers in developing sustainable internal financial support by funding endowed faculty positions. Providing student scholarships is another way that external funders can help support nonprofit centers.

As we have described in this publication, the development of professional and informal networks among center directors is important for center sustainability. We encourage external funders to support the convening of center directors and staff to share and exchange ideas. This support could include funding travel to professional conference, development of and travel to regional meetings, and electronic linking. In addition, external funders can invite and support academicians from other fields to engage in the study of nonprofit management.

External funders can also advocate to their foundation colleagues and academic peers the importance of the work of these centers. Funders can meet with university administrators to build internal institutional commitment to these centers. Funders can meet with educational association directors to stress the importance of and need for nonprofit management education and, in particular, the role that centers play in moving the field forward. And funders can share the excitement of this field and the need for its continued support with fellow funding officers in the foundation world.

- **Support the ongoing development of centers.**
- **Fund the convening of center directors and leaders to share and exchange ideas.**
- **Meet with university administrators to build internal support for the center.**
- **Invite academicians from other fields or from newly formed nonprofit centers to annual meetings.**

Conclusion

The findings and recommendations presented in this publication are intended to highlight some of the challenges that still exist in developing and sustaining nonprofit academic centers, as well as successful strategies that center directors have employed over the years to overcome these challenges. Our findings and recommendations are based in large part on work funded for over fifteen years by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. On behalf of the nonprofit sector, thank you for your generous support.

We hope this booklet provides information to help you build, expand, and support nonprofit academic centers and, in so doing, add to the vitality and viability of the third sector.

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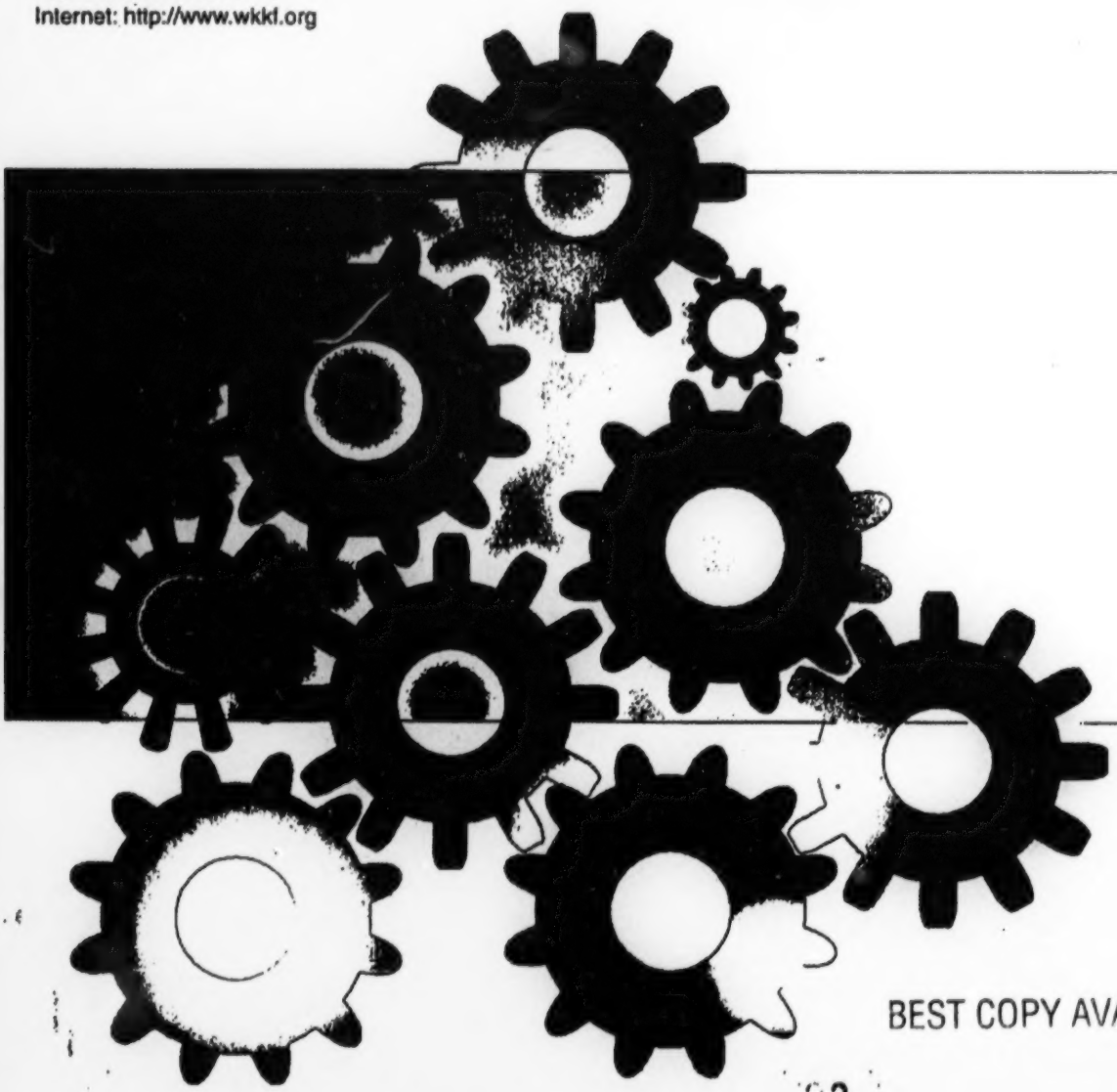

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